

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2021

The Honorable John Roth
Acting Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20330-1670

General Charles Q. Brown, Jr.
Chief of Staff of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Roth and General Brown,

We write to thank you for notifying us of the U.S. Air Force's decision to base an additional four KC-135s at Eielson Air Force Base (AFB), Alaska. We appreciate the Air Force's recognition of the significant aerial-refueling gap in Alaska and the desire to address it expeditiously. Overall, these four additional tankers will increase the much-needed refueling capacity in the Arctic and the Indo-Pacific regions and will further enable the strategic reach and power projection of Alaska's 5th generation fighters. Additionally, this move will help improve the Air Force's unparalleled access to the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) – the “crown jewel” of training ranges. We commend this important decision and look forward to providing input on strategic decisions in the near future.

As the Air Force begins implementation of this force structure move, we respectfully request that you notify us of key milestones and actions to include public release, initial and follow-on site surveys, and any resultant beddown support or military construction requirements. These elements are especially important to ensure that we continue to have the most current information to effectively advocate on behalf of the Air Force and our Alaskan constituents. Additionally, to assist in our broader oversight of the aerial-refueling aircraft portfolio, we request that the Air Force provide a comprehensive briefing on its overall tanker strategy. This should capture current and future capability, capacity, and basing requirements.

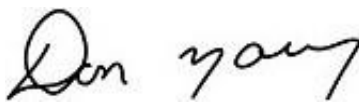
Finally, given Alaska's geostrategic, global position along the seams of several critical combatant commands – including the Indo-Pacific, Northern, and European Commands – we also encourage the Air Force to explore further improvements to its posture in the Arctic region. Among these considerations are: a “heel-to-toe” rotational presence of KC-46 aircraft to support RED FLAG-Alaska and Northern Sovereignty missions; a new multi-purpose hanger to enable rotational or surge operations for KC-46, B-21, or Global Hawk aircraft; basing additional KC-135s, beyond the four committed, to further reduce the aerial-refueling gap within the Arctic and Indo-Pacific theaters; and developing a JPARC modernization plan to incorporate new threats and targets throughout the training range.

As the Air Force rightfully acknowledges in its regional strategy: “The Arctic represents a cornerstone of the nation's defense.” We thank you for your leadership regarding this strategic basing decision, and we look forward to working with you to further enhance U.S. national security interests in the Arctic and around the globe.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senator



Don Young
Congressman for All Alaska



Dan Sullivan
U.S. Senator